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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
THURSDAY, MAY 15, 2008

In Today's Papers

FM Babacan Signals Expanding Ties with Iraq
Hurriyet, Sabah, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman, Yeni Safak and others report Foreign Minister Ali Babacan announced at a press conference yesterday that contacts between Turkey and the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) in northern Iraq will intensify. Babacan said Turkey's special envoy to Iraq Murat Ozcelik would visit Iraq "at least once a month." Liberal Radikal reports Babacan noted, "KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani could also visit Turkey." The press conference was held after Babacan's meeting with British Foreign Secretary David Miliband. Concerning the meetings with Miliband, FM Babacan noted they discussed the establishment of an industrial zone by Turkey, the UK, Kuwait, and Iraq on Iraq's border with Kuwait. He also noted Turkey, with the help of Britain, was planning to open a consulate in Basra.

Meanwhile, leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet reports, "Turkey has sent a delegation to Britain headed by Energy Ministry Deputy Undersecretary Selahattin Cimen to work out an agreement with British Petroleum (BP) in order to join efforts for oil exploration in northern Iraq."

Ahmet Turk: PKK Armed Struggle Harms Kurdish Interests in Turkey
All papers report Turkey's main Kurdish party DTP group Chief Ahmet Turk told the website of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) the armed struggle waged by the PKK "harms the interests of the Kurdish people, and strengthens the hand of the military." Turk said the PKK was ready to discuss a project offered by Turkey for a resolution to the Kurdish problem. "If the Turkish state insists on military solutions alone, we cannot do anything," Turk emphasized. He also pledged to work to end the fighting if Kurdish identity and language is recognized in Turkey. Turk also criticized the ruling AKP government, and said, "Kurds regret supporting the AKP in parliamentary elections last year."

Barzani Preparing 'Measures Package' on PKK
Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet says in a news commentary the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) President Massoud Barzani was preparing a "package of measures" regarding ties with Turkey. The measures will

be implemented if Turkey takes forward steps for expanding ties with the KRG. According to the package, the PKK's heavy weapons will be collected, and PKK militants who have not participated in terror attacks will be offered Iraqi citizenship or a chance to return to Turkey. The organization's Syrian and Iranian members will either be arrested or deported. The KRG insists on working out a political settlement regarding the PKK leadership, according to Cumhuriyet.

Meanwhile, Cumhuriyet also reports KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani will travel to Washington over the weekend for talks at the White House, the State Department, the U.S. Congress, and the Commerce Department.

Israeli PM Olmert Praises PM Erdogan's Mediating Efforts

Mainstream Hurriyet and Milliyet report Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said, "My good friend Erdogan is helping me to initiate stable dialogue with Syria. I hope the process will succeed but, in any case, I extend my appreciation to the Turkish PM for his efforts." Olmert added, "Turkey is the closest democracy to us in the region. We consider Turkey an EU country. We respect and support Turkey's will to become an EU member."

British Foreign Secretary Miliband Supports Turkey's EU Membership
Hurriyet, Sabah, Milliyet, Cumhuriyet, Yeni Safak and others: At a joint press conference with Foreign Minister Babacan, British FS Miliband said in response to a question about the closure case against AKP, "governments are elected by the people, not by the judges. The AKP was elected with great popular support. Constitutional principles should be respected; however, governments elected by the public should be supported." Regarding Turkey's EU

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membership, Miliband said "Turkey has made progress in its EU accession process and that should continue."

Turkey and Greece Hold Joint Military Search-and-Rescue Exercise
Mainstream Hurriyet reports on Wednesday, the Turkish and Greek militaries held a joint search and rescue exercise in Athens. The exercise, a first in the history of Turkey and Greece, was based on the scenario of a 7.4 magnitude earthquake hitting Greece. Turkish and Greek soldiers worked together to rescue people trapped under debris in the Ilion neighborhood, which is 20 km west of Athens. Following the exercise, the Turkish team commanded by General Abdullah Barutcu exchanged gifts with their Greek colleagues.

Editorial Commentary on Natural Disasters in China and Myanmar

"Warnings From The Disasters in China and Myanmar"

Sahin Alpay commented in Islamist-oriented Zaman (5/15): "The cyclone in Myanmar and the earthquake in China are major events that are erupting into greater disasters. This is a wake-up call regarding the impact of global warming on humanity. In addition to enormous natural disasters, global agricultural production is suffering from drought, which is resulting in a global food crisis. It is already too late for an across-the-globe-fight against global warming. The U.S. and China are primarily responsible for global warming, and they continue to refuse to sign the Kyoto Protocol. Turkey, despite its promises, also has not signed the Kyoto Protocol. In addition, the Myanmar disaster illustrates the collapse of the concept of state-oriented security. This is a shockingly sad example of the military government ignoring their people's desperate need for international aid, and focusing on their own regime's safety. The China earthquake should remind everyone of the imminent danger of earthquakes in Turkey. The events in China and Myanmar should serve as wake-up call for Turkey."

"China Earthquake"

Derya Sazak wrote in mainstream Milliyet (5/15): "Since the 1980s, China has pursued liberal economic policies. The philosophy was shaped as 'earning like a capitalist and distributing like a socialist,' which changed the fate of millions. However China ignored environmental risks during its rise as a global economic power. Now, this global power has been rocked by an enormous earthquake. Scenes from the debris are reminiscent of Turkey's 1999 earthquake; this week's earthquake in China is the biggest earthquake anywhere in the world during the last 30 years. Rapid

urbanization, overpopulated cities and the lack of proper infrastructure affected China negatively even before the latest earthquake disaster. China has already suffered from consequences of global warming. The recent earthquake should be a wake-up call to Turkey as well. In order to be ready for future earthquakes, building and housing structures must be enhanced."

TV Highlights
NTV

Domestic News

- Queen Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh Prince Philip visited the city of Bursa on Wednesday. The Royal Couple will visit Istanbul today and depart Turkey on Friday.
- CHP has submitted to parliament a censure motion against Prime Minister Erdogan for abusing his authority when he interfered in the sale of Sabah daily and ATV television on behalf of the pro-AKP Calik Group.
- The ruling AKP officials will hold a meeting in Kizilcahamam resort near Ankara from May 30-June 1 to discuss the lawsuit for banning their party.

International News

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- Greek Cypriot leader Demetris Christofias says he was not convinced Turkey is willing to resolve the Cyprus issue.
- President Bush arrived in Israel to take part in celebrations marking the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Jewish state.
- New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman writes the next American president will inherit many foreign policy challenges, but surely one of the biggest will be the cold war with Iran.

WILSON